DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 412 846 HE 030 637

AUTHOR	Taylor, Barbara E.; Klein, Christa R.
TITLE	Board Effectiveness in Theological Schools. AGB Occasional Paper No. 19.
INSTITUTION	Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, IN.
PUB DATE	1994-00-00
NOTE	17p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, One Dupont Circle, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036 (members, $4.95; nonmembers, $9.95; quantity discounts).
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Role; Board Administrator Relationship; Church Related Colleges; College Administration; *College Presidents; Governance; *Governing Boards; Higher Education; Institutional Advancement; Models; Religious Education; Strategic Planning; *Theological Education; *Trustees

ABSTRACT

The 1991 book "The Effective Board of Trustees" presents a model of governing board effectiveness, based on an empirical study of 22 private liberal arts and comprehensive colleges. Since the book was published, various nonprofit organizations, including seminaries and theological schools, have used this model in presentations, educational sessions, and board retreats. Trustees and presidents of most theological schools, however, have found that the model requires some adaptation to reflect the differences between their institutions and colleges--for instance, seminaries' relationships to church bodies, their institutional evolution, their culture, and their small size and scale. This paper briefly analyzes these differences and suggests considerations theological school leaders may want to address when using "The Effectiive Board of Trustees." The paper is organized according to the six competencies, or dimensions, that make up the board effectiveness model. A final section on the board and the president considers leadership issues. The paper does not restate the contents of the book, which includes detailed definitions of each of the six competencies, offers numerous suggestions for improving board performance, and explains the essential role presidents play in enhancing board performance. (AA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 412 846

Association of Governing Boards
of Universities and Colleges

Board Effectiveness in Theological Schools

By Barbara E. Taylor
and Christa R. Klein

With Assistance From Eugene Hensell, OSB;
Malcolm L. Warford; David Nasby;
and Robert Cooley

AGB OCCASIONAL PAPER No. 19

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AE030637

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

AGB

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

The AGB Occasional Paper Series addresses current and emerging issues of concern to board members and administrators in the context of their institutional settings. Written by acknowledged experts, AGB's Occasional Papers focus on educational and governance trends that affect boards and administrators.

AGB distributes new titles in the Occasional Paper Series as they are published to chief executives and board chairs of member institutions. Additional copies are available at a nominal charge by calling or writing to AGB.

Copyright 1994 Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, One Dupont Circle, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036. All rights reserved.

Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities
One Dupont Circle • Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: 202/296-8400 Fax: 202/223-7053

Board Effectiveness in Theological Schools

By Barbara E. Taylor and Christa R. Klein

With Assistance From Eugene Hensell, OSB; Malcolm L. Warford; David Nasby; and Robert Cooley

Funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

The 1991 book *The Effective Board of Trustees*[1] presents a model of governing board effectiveness, based on an empirical study of 22 private liberal arts and comprehensive colleges. Since the book was published, various nonprofit organizations, including seminaries and theological schools, have used this model in presentations, educational sessions, and board retreats. Trustees and presidents of most theological schools, however, have found that the model requires some adaptation to reflect the differences between their institutions and colleges—for instance, seminaries' relationships to church bodies, their institutional evolution, their culture, and their small size and scale. In this paper, we briefly analyze these differences and suggest considerations theological school leaders may want to address when using *The Effective Board of Trustees*.

We have organized our discussion according to the six competencies, or dimensions, that make up the board effectiveness model. A final section on the board and the president considers leadership issues. The paper does not restate the contents of the book, which includes detailed definitions of each of the six competencies, offers numerous suggestions for improving board performance, and explains the essential role presidents play in enhancing board performance.

1. The Contextual Dimension. An effective college board understands and respects the institution's mission, tradition, and history. The board's actions and behaviors are consistent with and reinforce institutional values, and the board shows loyalty and commitment to the institution.

In theological schools, such loyalty may exist and be reinforced by a wider commitment to a particular church body or religious movement. While this in no way suggests that affection for one school may readily be transferred to another related to the denomination, it does mean that trustees of theological schools value and evaluate these institutions for the service they render to the church. At the same time, as trustees become more knowledgeable about and attached to a particular school, they also may begin to judge church bodies in part according to the priority and resources they allocate to theological education.

As trustees of theological schools work to understand the context in which they govern, they should explore how this double-edged loyalty can work in favor of both the school and the church body or religious move-

ment. In some instances, trustees might need to understand better how their particular school fits into a denominationally defined configuration of schools. A board may even need to encourage partnerships with those schools to be an effective advocate for its own institution.

It is possible that trustees' attachment to their seminaries will increase as financial support from denominations declines, as is happening in many schools now. One could argue that commitment to serving a religious purpose should be unaffected by financial considerations, but in reality the flow of resources plays a potent role. To begin with, the person who pays the piper often calls the tune: To the extent that students, donors, or others must compensate for what the denomination cannot supply, those groups and individuals will expect to have more influence in institutional affairs. In addition, an institution's people may interpret a drop in denominational support as meaning that the sponsoring body does not value or appreciate the institution. In this case, the board may develop a deepened attachment and sense of advocacy for their school, as well as some sense of alienation from their church.

The stronger the culture and narrower the mission, the more readily a board can understand and attach itself to the school's distinctive character.

When a board is internally divided over the course charted by denominations—either for the denominations themselves or for theological education—trustees may find themselves in the difficult position of prioritizing their loyalties. In such instances, the trustee's role may be so thoroughly compromised as to make effective trusteeship impossible. Such battles over the integrity of the institution are most likely to occur in settings where theological institutions hold a privileged position within a church body.

The contextual dimension calls for a sense of tradition and is realized most effectively in institutions with a strong sense of identity. Yale historian of Christianity Jaroslav Pelikan describes *tradition* as "the living faith of the dead" and *traditionalism* as "the dead faith of the living." Certainly, trustees working for effective change in the context of their school's fundamental history, mission, and values want to carry on the living faith. The stronger the culture and narrower the mission, the more readily the board can understand and attach itself to the school's distinctive character. At the same time, the stronger an institution's reliance on tradition, the less freedom it has to change. Yet, as social and church contexts shift, the school may be called on to take a fresh look at its mission. Amid changing circumstances, a board plays a crucial role in considering and advocating policy changes that relate to the school's mission.

Boards must especially beware the temptation to expand degree and certificate programs beyond the institution's personnel and financial resources in an effort to attract more students. Although the marketing mania that has hit all of higher education has many positive features, the small

scale of theological schools exposes them to greater risk when they attempt to launch programs that stretch their mission beyond recognition. When a theological school loses both constituencies and purpose, its board is in the prime position to ask hard questions about the school's future viability and to probe the possibility of reducing programs or faculty, perhaps by cooperating with another institution. The times call for a degree of institutional boldness, hard-nosed thinking, and creativity while keeping institutional form subservient to mission.

2. The Educational Dimension. Effective college boards emphasize the need to learn—both about the institution and about trusteeship itself. Boards learn from seminars, workshops, and educational presentations; through seeking feedback on their performance; and by analyzing mistakes the board has made.

When it comes to learning about the institution, the boards of theological schools are at a disadvantage compared with boards of colleges. The vast majority of a typical college's trustees graduated from that college or some other college or university, and regardless of how much colleges may have changed in the interim, the experience provides trustees with a degree of confidence about their understanding of the institution. The average trustee finds college curricula relatively comprehensible: English, science, psychology, business administration, and the like figure in their daily lives and occupations. A board member need not have studied nuclear physics to have a rudimentary understanding of its function in the world.

Yet even at a college, when an academic joins a board previously made up solely of business people, the nonacademics often begin to defer excessively to the supposed "expert" in their midst. Never mind that the academic may be a philosophy professor who knows even less about chemistry than the average business person on the board. The aura of an academic background provides instant and often undeserved credibility.

This problem is more extreme on a theological school board, especially one comprising—as most seminary boards do—a mix of lay and ordained people, theologians and nontheologians. Most lay people, however well educated, are theologically unsophisticated, especially when they first join a seminary board. Moreover, it is more common for theological schools than for colleges to have faculty as voting board members.[2] The nonordained, nonfaculty, nontheologian members of the board can be strongly inclined to stay out of any discussion touching on mission and academic programs.

This has several negative consequences. First, mission and program are the heart of any academic institution, and a board that steers clear of these issues can hardly be said to be stewarding the institution. Second, reflecting back to the contextual dimension, the ability of a school to en-

courage attachment to the institution is directly related to trustees' understanding of what the institution does. If this knowledge is to be truly inspiring and energizing, it must be far deeper than "preparing pastors" or "educating lay people." Third (and this will figure prominently in discussion of the interpersonal dimension, below) a board with such a diverse membership may not work well together as a group unless bound together by a common set of understandings about the institution's core values and purposes.

The situation is even more complex for institutions whose boards are not self-perpetuating. Trustees who are selected by external bodies may arrive at the institution without even rudimentary knowledge about what the school does. In contrast, a board that selects its own members can engage prospective trustees in activities (campus events, committees and taskforces, discussions with the president) designed to teach them about the school and test their desire to continue learning even after they join the board. To the extent possible, then, presidents and trustees should use whatever influence they have with bodies that select new board members to encourage the appointment of people familiar with the institution and eager to learn—and continue learning—about it.

Theological schools also may be at a disadvantage with respect to the other facet of education: learning about trusteeship itself. Among the more powerful means by which boards learn are through seeking feedback on their performance and analyzing mistakes the board has made. As we will explain in more detail shortly, many theological school boards tend to seek harmony at any cost. In so doing, a board may be unwilling to criticize its own actions and performance, thus losing an important opportunity for learning. The educational function requires time and sometimes money, both of which are scarce commodities for many theological school boards. Board education also places demands on the president's and staff's time, a major issue for institutions that are chronically understaffed. Board retreats and attendance at regional and national trustee conferences can be more expensive than many seminaries can afford. Fortunately, over the past decade, theological school boards have increased the time and attention they give their institutions. In fact, on average, theological school boards meet slightly more frequently and report spending more time on trusteeship than the average board of a four-year private college.[3] This increased commitment should enable most boards to devote time to board education.

Some of the most valuable educational experiences are arranged by the school and take place at regular board meetings, minimizing expenses and staff time. Such "plenary sessions" or "miniworkshops" provide opportunities for the board to learn about trusteeship, theology, and the school and its core values. Trustees should be immersed in the real life of the school: They should have opportunities to discuss current theological and pedagogical issues; talk to faculty and students about their lives and concerns; and experience first hand the teaching, research, and public service the school pro-

vides. The goal is not to turn lay people into theologians or academics, but to make them theologically and educationally conversant enough that they can join with confidence in discussions about institutional mission, programs, and purposes.

3. The Interpersonal Dimension. Effective college boards nurture the development of trustees as a group, establish group goals, and consciously identify and cultivate leadership within the group.

At least three features of theological school trusteeship can undermine the sense of the board as a "corporate person." First, to many theological school trustees, the experience of trusteeship is individualistic and embedded in notions of individual service and one's personal relationship with God. Trustees may be attracted to board service out of a desire to seek support for their own faith. Yet trustees can nurture personal goals in a group environment without sacrificing one for the other, if they have opportunities to express their individual purposes publicly and to explore areas of common concern with other trustees.

Many theological boards tend to seek harmony at any cost. In so doing, a board may be unwilling to criticize its own actions and performance, thus losing an important opportunity for learning.

Such opportunities for discussion also help in dealing with a second feature that tends to undermine the cohesiveness of theological school boards. That feature is their increasing tendency toward diversity—in composition, outlook, and expectations of board service and institutional purposes. The typical theological school board may be among the most diverse higher education boards in existence, with a membership encompassing lay and ordained, male and female, self-perpetuating and appointed, racially and ethnically mixed, young and older, wealthy and struggling, theologically conversant and theologically unversed. We applaud diversity for the range of values and perspectives it brings to board deliberations. But without efforts to help trustees find common ground, such a group may not be able to act effectively as a corporate unit. Efforts to help board members know one another better as individuals can help. Social events and group discussions that allow for the expression and exchange of ideas can demystify differences among people and help individuals emerge as multidimensional persons rather than trustees who are perceived solely as, for example, a priest, a woman, an African-American, a faculty member, or a corporate executive.

Knowing one another better also can help a theological school board overcome the third barrier to cohesiveness: the urge to seek harmony at any cost. Explicitly or implicitly, many trustees interpret Christian culture and piety as requiring harmony above all else. However, people do have legiti-

mate differences, particularly if they come from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. And the greater the attachment to the school and the religious tradition, the higher the stakes seem, and the more these differences have the capacity to rend the group. Stifling differences or pretending they do not exist only drives them underground, where they weaken attachment, create unexpressed resentments, and undermine board cohesiveness.

Under wise leadership, a diverse board may have the inherent resources to overcome this tendency. One experienced president who has worked with an assortment of board members discovered that, because his trustees were exposed to diversity in other arenas, they could more readily find common ground among themselves. "The urge to have harmony at any cost quickly diminishes. Differences are more obvious and easier to accept. It causes us to develop better collaborative processes for doing our work."

The president and board chair play an essential role in fostering open exchange of views. First, they should encourage and reward the expression of diverse opinions. For instance, the chair might speak privately with a trustee known to have misgivings about a proposed board action and ask that she express her concerns at the board meeting. Or, if the board is rushing to closure on an important decision, the chair can slow the discussion and ask explicitly that the board explore the downside of the proposal. The president, in bringing a recommendation to the board, might review alternative courses of action and explain why he believes the recommended course is preferable.

Any factor that discourages a free exchange of ideas and a playful exploration of alternatives also undermines a board's ability to be analytical.

The quest for "efficiency" at board meetings often deprives trustees of natural occasions to build relationships with one another in the context of their common commitments. But given the opportunity, most board members welcome opportunities to socialize, to worship together, and to explore the school's academic side. The board chair and president should take advantage of this willingness as a way to nurture board members' interpersonal connections.

4. The Analytical Dimension. Effective college boards recognize complexities in the issues they face, including the effects on decision making of multiple constituencies and the multiple impacts that arise from a single action or decision. An effective board understands how different issues, actions, and decisions affect one another and is able to look at specific situations in light of general principles and broader perspectives.

The most common barrier to analytical thinking within theological school boards is the sometimes excessive desire for harmony that we described above. Any factor that discourages free exchange of ideas and playful exploration of alternatives also undermines a board's ability to be analytical.

For example, a theological school board may have a particular challenge to analytical thinking if board members automatically defer to religious or other authorities on the board. Such individuals may have sterling reputations in the pulpit and be wise and experienced bishops or heads of religious orders; their authority even may extend to making the final determination on board recommendations. But if their presence quells forthright exchange of opinions on the board, the quality of the board's decision making will suffer. This suggests that church leaders who sit on theological boards bear a special responsibility to encourage analytical thinking and free exchange of ideas among others on the board who might initially feel too deferential to speak honestly.

5. The Political Dimension. An effective college board respects and guards the integrity of the governance process, avoids win/lose situations, and accepts as one of its primary responsibilities the need to build healthy relationships among key constituencies. In doing so, the board keeps its options open as it seeks optimal solutions, respects the legitimate roles and responsibilities of other constituents, and consults often with key constituencies to seek opinion, approval, or consensus.

In many private colleges, the fundamental challenge of the political dimension is that the board must be willing to share authority with faculty and other constituencies. However, among theological schools, it is not uncommon for the board itself to compete for authority, particularly in relation to faculties, denominational organizations, and church leaders. Faculties have dominated decision making in the theological schools of most denominations and traditions. This influence grew out of a basic unity between boards and faculties in the founding years of new denominations and schools, but it has continued for other reasons. First, as we have already observed, many trustees are not theologically conversant, and so the average board's ability to sustain a significant role in policy making affecting the institution's mission is no match for that of the faculty—especially in cases where faculty serve as voting board members, which, as we noted earlier, is more likely to occur in theological schools than in colleges. Second, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), which accredits seminaries, traditionally has assumed that faculties should predominate in campus decision making. While this view seems to be changing as ATS gives increasing attention to board issues, accreditation is still driven largely by faculty, at least in part because faculty dominate the review committees responsible for the accreditation process.

Just as boards of public institutions face pressure from legislatures, governors, and state agencies, theological school boards are feeling pressure from national denominational organizations and church hierarchies, which are acting increasingly like regulatory agencies. Ironically, as the flow of resources to theological schools from these sources has declined, denominations' desire to control the schools' decision making has increased. More-

over, denominations that are undergoing restructuring—and many are—often send mixed signals to theological schools about what the church expects from them. In the case of the nondenominational seminary, where denominational politics are less salient, the political dimension involves building consensus concerning the school's mission with targeted external publics and with internal constituents.

Even where the board is a "player," effectiveness in the political dimension can be elusive. One reason is that theological school board members often are unfamiliar with—or uncomfortable with—political terminology and concepts. To some, the concept of "politics" suggests a view of leadership by compromise rather than on principle. (Some theological school leaders have suggested calling this the "governance dimension" or the "relational dimension.") Or it may be that while politics in theological schools are real enough, the search for harmony, rather than sometimes messy engagement, makes it difficult for boards to play a real leadership role. In any case, this distaste for things political means that theological school boards too often equivocate until they have essentially given away any authority they might have hoped to exercise. Or they may act by fiat and dictate outcomes, destroying the trust necessary for effective governance.

Another reason these boards frequently are ineffective in the political dimension is that the small size and scale of most theological schools can exacerbate whatever differences exist between boards and internal constituents, especially the faculty. In any setting, the decision to deny tenure to a faculty member, to cut a departmental budget, or to close a program is likely to reverberate through board-campus relationships. In circumstances where everyone knows everyone else rather intimately, and where open disagreement may be frowned on as "not Christian," the ability to engage in a tough discussion and decision, and then to move forward to other issues, can be highly constrained.

As with the other dimensions of board effectiveness, the president and board chair, in particular, help determine how well a board performs in the political arena. Their roles include the responsibility to ensure—largely by virtue of attention to trustee selection and board education—that the board is strong and self-assured enough to provide leadership in the decision-making process. Also, the president and board chair must be able to represent forcefully the importance of the theological school when speaking to external organizations and individuals.

6. The Strategic Dimension. An effective college board directs its attention to a few priorities or decisions identified as having strategic or symbolic importance to the institution. The board anticipates problems and acts before issues become urgent or critical. It takes sensible risks and accepts responsibility for its actions.

Effective institutional strategies focus on those few issues that are critical to long-term viability and vitality. In higher education generally, as well as in theological education, the concept of "strategy" is often misunderstood as meaning nothing more than adaptation of the institution and its mission to the immediate needs of the market. Like many other institutions, theological schools bear rich traditions that shape their responses to the environment and provide the resources and grounding for effective change. Thus, institutions are wise to make certain that their values and past commitments underlie decisions about current and future strategic directions.

Change is difficult, especially where traditions are strong. The relative narrowness of mission in theological schools (as compared with other higher education institutions) leaves institutions with a narrower range of strategic options. Also, as we noted earlier, many theological school governing boards are part of complex governance systems in which they share authority with other religious organizations. Often the governing board cannot act without time-consuming negotiations with others. Moreover, effective change requires knowledge of a school's mission and programs, and not all boards are well enough informed to join in discussions of strategic goals. At the same time, however, trustees often are familiar and comfortable with the language of marketing and strategy and can play a major role in educating the school about how to adapt and use these tools appropriately.

Because many trustees are not theologically conversant, the average board's ability to sustain a significant role in policy making affecting the institution's mission is no match for that of the faculty.

Grounding the board's work in institutional strategy pays dividends for the board and the school. Without a clear notion of where the school is heading and how it hopes to get there, most board meetings are boring, and most boards feel peripheral to the real issues facing the school. In such circumstances, individual trustees may find ways to provide service to the institution, but the board as an entity underperforms and rarely provides a strategic advantage to the school. When their talent and time are underutilized, gifted and committed trustees may leave the board, literally or psychically.[4] No theological school today can afford this loss.

Finally, with reference back to the contextual dimension, what is the full obligation of a board committed to serving the church when it begins to think strategically? The president and board can draw inspiration from New Testament accounts of the early church adapting its organization and norms to fit changing circumstances. In viewing their tradition as "living faith," they are outfitted for the creative work of ensuring that their school remains

vital and viable. A biblical text for the board could be Psalm 137: "How shall we sing God's song in a new land?"

The Role of the President. Leon Pacala, former executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, identifies "three roles that increasingly define presidential leadership" in theological schools.[5] We might add that each role has implications for board-president interaction and for the ability of a board to function effectively.

First, a president is responsible for *management and leadership*. Initially, Pacala notes, presidents may give most of their attention to immediate operational concerns. But after a few years, once "the most urgent institutional problems" have been addressed, successful presidents turn to issues of strategy and institutional vision: "In this regard, the essence of executive leadership consists of clarifying institutional missions and purposes, and above all, envisioning the future toward which the institution is to be directed."

The complex management/leadership role has clear implications for boards and their relationships with their presidents. To begin with, the tendency of some boards to become involved in operations is a response to the failure of some presidents to manage the school themselves. Management, as Pacala and many others have noted, is not a concept with which academic institutions have always been comfortable. The traditional notion that colleges and schools should be nonhierarchical and faculty-dominated can make it extremely difficult for a president to manage. Moreover, few presidents are trained in management, particularly in the skills needed to deal with declining resources and changing missions. A board that senses the school is in or is headed for trouble, and fears that the president is not managing the situation well, may respond by stepping in to fill the breach. Boards have been hearing for a long time that a good board is an "active" board, and without a president capable of managing both the school *and* the board, trustees well may become inappropriately active—in operational decision making and second guessing.

The visionary and strategic role of the president is the source of much of an effective board's strength. The focused, productive expenditure of time and attention that characterizes board behavior in all six dimensions of board effectiveness arises directly from a coherent and compelling vision of the school's future that can come only from the president. A board that focuses on the wrong issues, wastes time, and misses opportunities usually does so because the president has not articulated a compelling vision and, in turn, has failed to direct trustee attention to matters of consequence.

The second presidential role Pacala identifies is *financial development*. As church support declines, this task consumes at least a third of an average president's time and "is becoming synonymous with presidential leader-

ship." While Pacala does not mention the fund-raising role of the board in this discussion, successful development programs are heavily dependent on trustee involvement as contributors and fund raisers.[6]

Many trustees are reluctant to become involved in development work, and it falls to the president (and the chief development officer) to provide the vision and the practical training and assistance that encourage trustees to commit themselves effectively to their fund-raising role.

Many presidents wish for a board that raises money and otherwise stays out of the way. Such presidents are virtually always disappointed. The personal commitment and feelings of inclusion that encourage trustees to participate in fund raising are nurtured through attention to board effectiveness broadly construed. That is, effectiveness in fund raising depends on understanding institutional context, becoming educated, feeling part of the board group, focusing on long-term strategic issues, and so on—all of the competencies that distinguish an effective board.

Pacala's third presidential role is the management of *constituency concerns*. An effective president, he explains, is able to guide the school "in the face of competing and often conflicting expectations of governing boards, faculties, students, graduates, church constituencies, and other publics." This role is similar to the political dimension of trusteeship, in which effective boards seek to understand and take into account the views of stakeholders.

A president occupies a paradoxical role in relation to the board. On the one hand, the board is the president's employer and the repository of all or much of the school's formal decision-making authority. On the other hand, no board can lead for long without the information and guidance a president provides. In managing the board as a constituency, a president must serve as both teacher and leader. More than any other person or group, it is the president who determines board effectiveness. The president leads in defining institutional vision, plans board agendas, educates the board about the school and about trusteeship, acquaints the board with constituents and their opinions, and in various other ways shapes the board's view of the school and its own role.

Pacala notes that "the overwhelming majority of presidents view their role in pastoral terms." This characteristic of theological school life has virtually no parallel among colleges and universities, including most church-related colleges. A narrow interpretation of the president's "pastoral" role as institutional chaplain can affect a board's expectations of presidential leadership. Theological schools are under intense pressure, which almost inevitably leads to confusion and dissent among constituents. If a board expects a president, as pastor, to maintain harmony and an atmosphere of total agreement and affirmation, the measure of a president's success will be his ability

to keep everyone happy. Notwithstanding the need for a president to be affable, approachable, and able to take multiple views into account, the expectation that she can create total harmony and happiness in such stressful times is unrealistic and damaging.

In light of this emphasis on the pastoral, the board's chief task is to provide support for the president. This does not mean a board must supply total agreement and uncritical backing, but it does require that when times are difficult the board be willing to be the president's partner in searching for workable solutions. If presidents felt secure in knowing they could help the institution take on the hard issues without being blamed for violating the norm of perpetual harmony, more presidents might be inclined in that direction.

As one experienced theological school president says, "Presidents need to know that they can help resolve some of the issues facing their schools and not fall victim to 'the way things are.' Boards, in turn, can find new freedom and authority as they strengthen the presidency and their own performance and change the expectations for a president's and a board's leadership."

Common Ground. Despite the differences between theological schools and other institutions of higher education, such matters as the importance of board leadership, the way it is defined, and the path to achieving it remain much the same. The pressures of societal change, scarce resources, challenges to traditional missions, and competing constituent demands are confronting all educational institutions. And, correspondingly, the role of boards is changing and becoming more central to the future of those institutions. Without effective boards, theological schools will falter as they confront the complex challenges that are with us now and likely will intensify.

Fortunately, it is possible for trustees and presidents working together to improve board performance quite dramatically and in turn for an effective board to contribute to strengthening the institution it governs. What is required is the commitment of trustees and presidents toward the goal of improving board performance. Few efforts have greater potential for enhancing any institution.

Notes

1. Chait, Richard P.; Thomas P. Holland; and Barbara E. Taylor. *The Effective Board of Trustees*. New York: ACE/MacMillan, 1991 (1st printing); Phoenix: ACE/Oryx, 1993 (2nd printing).

2. "Survey of Governing Board Characteristics, Policies, and Practices." Washington, D.C.: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, July 1991.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Chait, Richard P. and Barbara E. Taylor. "Charting the Territory of Nonprofit Boards." *Harvard Business Review*. January/February 1989, pp. 44-54.

5. Pacala, Leon. "The Presidential Experience in Theological Education: A Study of Executive Leadership." *Theological Education*, Autumn 1992. pp. 23-26.

6. Taylor, Barbara E. "Results of a National Survey of College and University Fund-Raising Practices." In John W. Pocock, *Fund-Raising Leadership*. Washington, D.C.: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 1989.

Authors and Contributors

Barbara E. Taylor is vice president for programs and research at the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

Christa R. Klein is an independent consultant and researcher on the governance of religious institutions, based in York, Pa.

Eugene Hensell, OSB is president of St. Meinrad College and Seminary in St. Meinrad, Ind.

Malcolm L. Warford is president of Bangor Theological Seminary in Bangor, Me.

David Nasby is board chair of Luther Northwestern Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

Robert Cooley is president of Gordon-Conwell Seminary in South Hamilton, Mass.

The AGB Occasional Paper Series

1. **Emerging Policy Issues for Community Colleges**
   By Louis W. Bender

2. **Emerging Policy Issues for State Coordinating Boards**
   By Patrick M. Callan

3. **Emerging Policy Issues for Public Multicampus Systems**
   By Alms C. McGuiness Jr.

4. **Emerging Policy Issues for Foundations of Public Institutions**
   By Royster C. Hedgepeth

5. **Emerging Policy Issues for Single-Campus Public Institutions**
   By Kenneth P. Mortimer

6. **Emerging Policy Issues for Historically Black Institutions**
   By Alan H. Kirschner

7. **Emerging Policy Issues for Theological Schools and Seminaries**
   By Christa R. Klein

8. **Emerging Policy Issues for Church-Related Institutions**
   By The Reverend William McInnes

9. **Emerging Policy Issues for Private Research Universities**
   By Roger L. Geiger

10. **Emerging Policy Issues for Liberal Arts Colleges**
    By Kathryn Mohrman

11. **Information Systems for Board of Theological Seminaries**
    By Lawrence M. Butler

12. **Achieving Integrity in Intercollegiate Athletics**
    By Wilford S. Bailey

13. **Policies for Improving Trustee Selection in the Public Sector**
    By Patrick M. Callan and Dean A. Honetschlager

14. **Emerging Issues in Independent School (K-12) Governance**
    By Pearl R. Kane

15. **Tuition and Finance Issues for Public Institutions**
    By Thomas P. Wallace, Darryl J. Greer, and James R. Mingle

16. **Issues of Athletic Certification for NCAA Division I Members**
    By Maureen E. Devlin

17. **Long-Term Tuition Policy: What Happens When Tuition Rises Faster Than Ability to Pay?**
    By John A. Dunn Jr.

18. **"New Partnering" for Higher Education-and the Corporate Sector**
    By Delwin A. Roy

19. **Board Effectiveness in Theological Schools**
    By Barbara E. Taylor and Christa R. Klein

All titles in this series are available at modest prices from AGB Publications, 202/296-8400.